

WHAT IS CLAIMED AND DESIRED TO BE SECURED BY LETTERS
PATENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS:

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1. A system for placing and maintaining anchored
conversations, comprising:

a conversation coordinator configured to anchor at
least one conversation client to one of an application
and an artifact of said application.

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2. The system according to claim 1, wherein said
conversation coordinator and said conversation client
are separate applications linked together by
communications such that said conversation coordinator
directs initiation and positioning of said conversation
client.

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3. The system according to claim 1, wherein said
communications made by said conversation client are
persistent and accessible via said conversation
coordinator.

4. The system according to claim 1, further
comprising:

7 a database configured to store conversations
8 engaged in by said conversation client;

9 wherein said conversation coordinator is further
10 configured to allow a user access to any current or
11 previous conversations stored in said database.

12 5. The system according to claim 1, wherein:

13 said conversation coordinator comprises,

14 a request handler configured to receive
15 conversation requests from a requesting conversation
16 client, and

17 a client mechanism configured to initiate a
18 recipient conversation client having an anchor position,
19 application, and artifact equivalent to the application,
20 artifact, and anchor position of the requesting
21 conversation client.

22 6. The system according to claim 5, wherein said
23 request handler includes an approval mechanism that
24 identifies whether an intended recipient of the
25 conversation request approves entering into an anchored
26 conversation.

1 7. The system according to claim 6, wherein said
2 approval mechanism includes an id device that identifies
3 all participants of a conversation to the intended
4 recipient.

1 8. The system according to claim 5, wherein:
2 said client mechanism comprises,
3 a startup mechanism configured to initiate a target
4 application associated with a conversation request
5 received by the request handler;
6 a retrieval mechanism configured to retrieve an
7 artifact associated with the conversation request and
8 load the retrieval artifact into the target application;
9 a connection manager configured to establish a
10 communications link with the requesting conversation
11 client and the recipient conversation client; and
12 an anchor device configured to locate and attach
13 the recipient conversation client to the equivalent
14 anchor position in the retrieved artifact.

1 9. The system according to claim 8, wherein said
2 anchor device is further configured to track a location
3 of said equivalent anchor position, and position a user
4 interface of the conversation client to within a

5 predetermined proximity of the anchor if a position of
6 the anchor is moved.

7 10. The system according to claim 8, wherein said
8 anchor device comprises:

9 an attachment device configured to maintain a
10 position of the conversation client relative to the
11 corresponding anchor;

12 an unattach device configured to disassociate the
13 position of the conversation client from a corresponding
14 anchor; and

15 a reattachment device configured to re-attach a
16 detached conversation client to the position of its
17 corresponding anchor.

1 11. The system according to claim 8, further
2 comprising:

3 a database configured to store communications
4 between conversation clients; and

5 a conversation retrieval mechanism configured to
6 retrieve previous communications from the database that
7 are associated with the requesting conversation client
8 and load the retrieved previous communications into at
9 least the recipient conversation client.

1 12. The system according to claim 11, wherein:
2 said connection manager establishes a connection
3 that connects said database to the initiated
4 conversation client so that said database is a silent
5 participant that logs any conversations participated in
6 by the initiated conversation client into said database.

1 13. The system according to claim 1, further
2 comprising:

3 a database mechanism configured to store
4 conversation information of the conversation client in
5 a database.

1 14. The system according to claim 13, wherein said
2 conversation information includes a history of at least
3 one of a location in the artifact of an anchor
4 corresponding to the conversation client, and
5 communications between the conversation client and
6 another client.

1 15. The system according to claim 1, further
2 comprising:

3 an API mechanism configured to initiate at least
4 one target application and load an artifact into the
5 target application; and

6 an anchor device configured to anchor a
7 conversation client to one of the artifact and an anchor
8 of the artifact.

1 16. The system according to claim 15, wherein said
2 API mechanism includes at least one application control
3 device configured to direct operations of at least one
4 target application via a target application programming
5 interface.

1 17. The system according to claim 5, wherein said
2 conversation coordinator further comprises a
3 synchronization device configured to notify a user of
4 the recipient conversation client if the artifact
5 associated with the recipient conversation client
6 becomes out of sync with a master document.

1 18. The system according to claim 17, wherein said
2 synchronization device includes an activatable input
3 mechanism by which a user may activate a synchronization
4 process to update the out of synch artifact.

5 19. The system according to claim 17, wherein said
6 conversation coordinator further comprises an update
7 mechanism configured to update the artifact based on
8 changes to the master document.

1 20. The system according to claim 17, wherein said
2 master document is the artifact of the requesting
3 conversation client.

1 21. The system according to claim 5, wherein said
2 conversation coordinator further comprises an anchor
3 identification mechanism configured to identify other
4 anchored conversations in the artifact of the recipient
5 conversation client and one of highlight, grey, and make
6 invisible each identified anchor based on a
7 predetermined access/privacy setting.

1 22. The system according to claim 1, wherein said
2 conversation coordinator comprises:

3 a client mechanism configured to initiate a
4 conversation client; and

5 an anchor device configured to position the
6 conversation client relative to one of said application
7 and an anchor of said artifact.

1 23. The system according to claim 1, wherein said
2 conversation coordinator further comprises a messaging
3 device configured to receive messages from said
4 application.

1 24. The system according to claim 23, wherein said
2 messages include at least one of an anchor position,
3 invocation of an anchored conversation, and adding an
4 anchor.

1 25. The system according to claim 1, wherein said
2 conversation coordinator includes a communications
3 device configured to route communications, from the
4 conversation client to a communications network, and
5 from the communications network to the conversation
6 client.

1 26. The system according to claim 25, wherein said
2 communications device is an IRC client configured to
3 pass and retrieve communication to an IRC network.

1 27. The system according to claim 1, wherein:

2 said conversation coordinator includes a database
3 mechanism configured to connect a remote database as a
4 silent participant to the conversation client.

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28. An anchored conversation support device,
2 comprising:

3 a placement mechanism configured to place an anchor
4 at a selected position with an artifact of an
5 application; and

6 an action device configured to recognize actions
7 taken by a user with respect to the anchor and activate
8 routines configured to implement the actions taken.

1 29. The device according to claim 28, wherein:
2 said anchor comprises an ActiveX component inside
3 an in-line shape; and

4 said action device includes a set of routines each
5 associated with at least one corresponding of said user
6 actions and initiated by said ActiveX component.

1 30. The device according to claim 29, wherein said
2 routines are macros defined within said application.

1 31. The device according to claim 28, wherein said
2 actions comprise at least one of adding an anchor,
3 moving an anchor, deleting an anchor, and activating an
4 anchor.

1 32. The device according to claim 28, wherein said
2 action device includes an application conversation
3 interface comprising a set of application programming
4 interface extensions configured to communicate said user
5 actions to a conversation coordinator configured to
6 respond to implement said user actions.

1 33. A system for invoking anchored conversations
2 having artifacts of applications as a context,
3 comprising:

4 an application conversation interface (ACI) having
5 an application access mechanism that allows access and
6 manipulation of application operations of each of the
7 said applications; and

8 an anchor mechanism configured to identify and
9 attach a conversation client to a selected anchor
10 position in an artifact.

1 34. The system according to claim 33, wherein said
2 conversation client comprises a communication client
3 capable of any one of text, sound, graphic, tactile,
4 video, and other communication mediums.

1 35. The system according to claim 33, further
2 comprising:

3 a conversation coordinator configured to,
4 receive initiation requests from an application,
5 initiate a conversation client to be anchored at
6 an anchor position associated with the initiation
7 request, and
8 send anchored conversation request for initiating
9 an anchored conversation client at a recipient host
10 having a same application, artifact, and anchor position
11 as the requesting conversation client.

1 36. A method of initiating and coordinating
2 anchored conversations, comprising the steps of:

3 receiving a conversation request from a
4 conversation client anchored in a master artifact; and
5 initiating an anchored conversation with the
6 requesting conversation client.

1 37. The method according to claim 36, wherein said
2 step of initiating an anchored conversation includes the
3 steps of:

4 sending a conversation invitation to an intended
5 recipient of the conversation request;

6 receiving an invitation response from the
7 recipient;

8 initiating a synchronous anchored conversation with
9 the recipient if said invitation response is
10 affirmative; and

11 initiating an asynchronous anchored conversation
12 with the recipient if said invitation response is not
13 affirmative.

1 38. The method according to claim 36, wherein said
2 step of initiating an anchored conversation comprises
3 the steps of:

4 starting an application corresponding to the master
5 artifact;

6 retrieving and loading a copy of the master
7 artifact into the invoked application; and

8 anchoring a recipient communications client at an
9 anchor point corresponding to an anchor point of the
10 requesting conversation client.

1 39. The method according to claim 36, further
2 comprising the step of:

3 maintaining the initiated anchored conversation.

1 40. The method according to claim 39, wherein said
2 step of maintaining the anchored conversation includes
3 the step of:

4 changing contexts of said anchored conversation
5 when an anchor position of said anchored conversation
6 is moved to a different application or artifact.

1 41. The method according to claim 39, wherein said
2 step of maintaining includes the step of:

3 ending said conversation by shutting down each
4 conversation client based on a request and/or action by
5 at least one participant of the conversation.

1 42. A method of managing anchored conversations,
2 comprising the steps of:

3 placing an anchor in an artifact of an application;
4 linking the anchor to a set of anchored
5 conversation implementation routines; and
6 managing an anchored conversation based on user
7 actions affecting said anchor.

1 43. The method according to claim 42, wherein said
2 step of managing comprises the step of initiating at
3 least of said set of anchored conversation
4 implementation routines based upon at least one of said
5 user actions affecting said anchor.

1 44. The method according to claim 43, wherein said
2 user actions include at least one of invoking an anchor,
3 deleting an anchor, and moving an anchor.

1 45. The method according to claim 43, wherein said
2 step of managing comprises the step of:
3 calling an outside conversation coordinator to
4 implement a function required by said user actions.

1 46. The method according to claim 42, wherein said
2 set of anchored conversation implementation routines are
3 at least part of an API of the application.

1 47. A system for anchored conversations,
2 comprising:

3 means for initiating and maintaining conversation
4 clients at each of a requesting host and a recipient
5 host, including,

6 means for receiving an anchored conversation
7 request from an application at a requestor host, said
8 application having an artifact with an anchor
9 identifying a location of an anchored conversation;

10 means for initiating a requestor conversation
11 client associated with the application at a requestor
12 host;

13 means for anchoring said requestor conversation
14 client, comprising a means for maintaining a position
15 of said requestor conversation client relative to said
16 anchor of said artifact of said application at said
17 requestor host;

18 means for requesting startup of a recipient
19 conversation client;

20 means for starting said application at a recipient
21 host;

22 means for retrieving a copy of said artifact into
23 said application at said recipient host; and

24 means for anchoring said recipient conversation
25 client, comprising a means for maintaining a position
26 of said recipient conversation client relative to said
27 anchor of said artifact of said application at said
28 recipient host.